

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as indicated below.

1. (Currently Amended) An aqueous pigment paste, comprising, based on the total weight of the aqueous pigment paste:

(A) from 15 to 40% by weight of at least one metal pigment;

(B) from 0.45 to 0.75% by weight of at least one nonassociative thickener comprising at least one methacrylate copolymer based on C₁-C₆ alkyl (meth)acrylate and (meth)acrylic acid;

(C) from 0.1 to 0.4% by weight of at least one organic amine;

(D) from 0.5 to 8% by weight of at least one nonionic surfactant; and

(E) at least 50% by weight of water;

based on total weight, wherein the aqueous pigment paste is free from binders and grinding resins.

2. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 1, wherein the at least one nonassociative thickener (B) comprises in copolymerized form at least two different C₁-C₆ alkyl (meth)acrylate monomers.

3. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 1, wherein the at least one nonassociative thickener (B), based on its total weight, comprises from 40 to 60% by weight of methacrylic acid in copolymerized form.

4. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 1, wherein the at least one organic amine (C) is selected from the group consisting of tertiary amines.

5. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 4, wherein the at least one organic tertiary-amine (C) is selected from the group consisting of hydroxyalkylamines.

6. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 5, wherein the at least one organic amine hydroxyalkylamine (C) is dimethylethanolamine.

7. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 1, wherein the at least one metal pigment (A) comprises an aluminum pigment.

8. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 1, comprising at least 52% by weight of water, based on total weight.

9. (Currently Amended) The aqueous pigment paste of claim 1, comprising:

(A) 34% by weight of an aluminum pigment;

(B) 0.53% by weight of a nonassociative thickener comprising at least one methacrylate copolymer based on C₁-C₆ alkyl (meth)acrylate and (meth)acrylic acid;

(C) 0.22% by weight of an organic amine;

(D) 0.61% by weight of a nonionic surfactant; and

(E) 54% by weight of water;

based on the total weight of the aqueous pigment paste.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of preparing a coating material, comprising adding ~~an~~the aqueous pigment paste free from binders and grinding resins of, ~~as claimed in~~ claim 1, to an aqueous coating material comprising at least one effect pigment.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the aqueous coating materials ~~are~~is an aqueous basecoat materials.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for making a multicoat paint system, comprising applying the aqueous coating material of claim 10 to a substrate.

13. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing an aqueous coating material comprising at least one effect pigment, comprising:

mixing the at least one aqueous pigment paste of claim 1 with at least one aqueous mixing varnish comprising at least one water-soluble and/or -dispersible binder and homogenizing the resulting mixture,

wherein the at least one pigment paste comprises at the least one aqueous pigment paste of claim 1 free from binders and grinding resins, as claimed in claim 1, and is used in an amount such that the resulting mixture comprises:

-from 0.1 to 6% by weight of the at least one metal pigment (A);

-from 0.05 to 2% by weight of the at least one nonassociative thickener (B) comprising at least one methacrylate copolymer based on C₁-C₆ alkyl (meth)-acrylate and (meth)acrylic acid; and

-from 0.02 to 2.4% by weight of the at least one nonionic surfactant (D), based on total weight.

14. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 13, wherein the at least one water-soluble and/or -dispersible binder is selected from the group consisting of random (co)polymers, alternating (co)polymers, block (co)polymers, linear (co)polymers, branched (co)polymers, comb addition (co)polymers, (co)polymers comprising ethylenically unsaturated monomers, polyaddition resins, polycondensation resins, and combinations comprising at least two of the foregoing.

15. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 14, comprising at least one member selected from addition (co)polymers of ethylenically unsaturated monomers selected from the group consisting of (meth)acrylate (co)polymers, partially hydrolyzed polyvinyl esters; , polyaddition resins selected from the group consisting of polyesters, alkyds, polyurethanes, polylactones, polycarbonates, polyethers, epoxy resin-amine adducts, polyureas, polyamides, polyimides, polyester-polyurethanes, polyether-polyurethanes, polyester-polyether-polyurethanes and combinations of at least two of the foregoing; polycondensation resins selected from the group consisting of polyesters,

alkyds, polyurethanes, polylactones, polycarbonates, polyethers, epoxy resin-amine adducts, polyureas, polyamides, polyimides, polyester-polyurethanes, polyether-polyurethanes, polyester-polyether-polyurethanes and combinations of at least two of the foregoing; and combinations of at least two of the foregoing.